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Chairman: Mr. Al-Hinai ..... (Oman)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 27: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/56/140)

Agenda item 108: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/56/3, A/56/57-E/2001/5, A/56/73-E/2001/68 and Add.1, A/56/114-E/2001/93 and Add.1, A/56/169, A/56/180 and A/56/288; E/2001/104; A/C.3/56/L.2 and L.3)

Agenda item 109: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/56/152)

1. **Mr. Martins** (Angola) associated himself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Botswana on behalf of the Southern Africa Development Community. He took note of the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/56/140), and welcomed the programme of work of the Commission for Social Development for the period 2002-2006, which he hoped would prove to be effective.

2. Since the World Summit for Social Development in 1995, social development priorities had shifted because it had become clear that, in order to make society more just and improve living conditions, it was vital to build on the potential of individuals, which meant promoting education, health and social cohesion. For that reason, social development was now linked to new elements such as greater community involvement and the creation of partnerships. There nonetheless remained a wide gap between experience gained in social development and the limited ability of some countries to engage in innovative development in that area. Angola thanked the countries that had fulfilled their commitment to help fund social development. It also congratulated all United Nations agencies concerned with social development on the quality of their reports and recommendations.

3. Because of the internal conflict that had ravaged Angola for more than three decades, the country's human development indicators remained very low, as the *Human Development Report* showed. It was unacceptable and tragic that the Angolan population still lacked access to basic social services. To remedy that deplorable situation, the Angolan Government had in 1999 launched a new humanitarian emergency programme and had begun to implement a poverty reduction strategy, with the support of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and the European Union.

4. Moreover, in order to promote its social development, it had established partnerships with civil society organizations and the private sector. In particular, it had made arrangements with oil companies for those companies to set aside a share of their profits for community projects. As a result, the private sector was more involved in social development. In addition, as the Government moved the management of its social development activities closer to community level, those communities were ever more frequently involved.

5. The Angolan Government was convinced that education and health were vital to economic and social development. Health services in particular helped to reduce the incidence of disease and thereby helped individuals to work productively. Despite the conflict, Angola remained determined to further its social development, in accordance with the commitment it had entered into at the World Summit for Social Development and the special session of the General Assembly on social development.

6. While it was vital for the United Nations to redouble its efforts to promote social development and eradicate poverty, it must also focus on promoting peace, which was a prerequisite for social development.

7. **Ms. Joseph** (Saint Lucia), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that despite the tragic events of 11 September 2001, the international community should not forget the need to address numerous economic and social inequities. The International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Monterrey in March 2002, would be a positive event in that regard, giving the international community an important opportunity to address the numerous issues effecting social development in the context of globalization. CARICOM saw the Conference as a useful means to

seek new solutions to correct social and economic imbalances caused by varying levels of development and of vulnerability.

8. One of the major issues affecting social development was that of migration, which presented considerable challenges at the national and regional levels. According to the findings of various expert groups, migration was a sensitive indicator of the economic situations in individual countries, while current research on the world socio-economic situation did not attribute sufficient weight to migration. CARICOM had progressed significantly in addressing migration issues. A regional mechanism for the free movement of university graduates and skilled workers was being set up, with 10 member States currently completing the legal process to permit the free movement of graduates, while three States had taken all the necessary steps to facilitate free movement by other categories of workers.

9. The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, adopted by the General Assembly in 1995, was designed to address more effectively the problems of young people and to increase their opportunities for participation in society. CARICOM reiterated its support for the Programme, which contained recommendations in 10 priority areas: education, employment, hunger, poverty, the environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, leisure activities, girls and young women, and full and effective participation by youth in the life of society and in decision-making.

10. One of the most dynamic initiatives taken by the international community in favour of youth had been the convening of sessions of the World Youth Forum, the most recent of which had been held in Dakar in August 2001. CARICOM supported the Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy, which had been adopted at that session, particularly in respect of the serious health issues affecting young people, especially HIV/AIDS, and also associated itself with the call for the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, adopted by the General Assembly at its special session in June 2001. The CARICOM States had recently entered into a new pan-Caribbean partnership against HIV/AIDS designed to reduce the number of infections, provide care and support for those affected by the virus or the disease, and protect them from discrimination.

11. Through their Ministerial Council on Human and Social Development, which coordinated activities in the vital areas of health, youth, sports, gender and culture, the CARICOM States had developed a number of regional initiatives relating to youth. In 1998, they had brought together young people from 22 Caribbean countries for a conference in Barbados and the Bahamas, at which a range of health, governance and social development issues had been addressed. That had been followed in 2000 by a successor event held in Grenada. In May 2001, CARICOM had convened the second meeting of officials responsible for youth issues, in which regional and international agencies, education institutions and youth organizations had also taken part. The participants in the meeting had identified the need for a regional youth database to assist in policy formation and the development of career structures, and to elaborate a method for youth participation in decision-making. Various modalities had also been recommended for addressing youth poverty and adolescent health.

12. Older persons made up a steadily growing segment of the population in the Caribbean as in many countries of the world. According to a report by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, persons over 60 years of age would make up 10.6 per cent of the population in 2005, compared with 6.9 per cent in 1950; those over 75 were predicted to make up 28 per cent of the elderly population by 2005, compared with 19.2 per cent in 1950. The same report also emphasized problems relating to physical safety and income security for older persons, planning for ageing, inter-generational relationships, and the financial constraints faced by Governments in their efforts to ensure that older persons were not marginalized. In view of those changes, the Caribbean countries had embarked on a number of activities, particularly in relation to helping older persons to remain productive by means of work in microenterprises, the transmission of certain cultural values in educational institutions, and the provision of mediation and advisory services.

13. With the full effects of ageing not expected in the Caribbean until at least 2030 according to some studies, the region had adequate time to deal with the related issues through innovative strategies, such as the programme in Trinidad and Tobago, which provided for public awareness and training activities, increased economic assistance to the elderly, and a national

survey of the living conditions of older persons. The Caribbean States had in fact already begun to implement such strategies. As of 1999, St. Lucia had begun a programme of construction and renovation of homes for the elderly and persons with disabilities.

14. According to some estimates, there were over 500 million disabled persons in the world, or 10 per cent of the global population, and two thirds of them lived in developing countries. In the light of their current situation, there was a need to continue strengthening the initiatives already undertaken to facilitate their full integration in the mainstream of society.

15. CARICOM noted with satisfaction the special focus of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the needs of children who were disabled as a result of armed conflicts, and it wished to acknowledge with appreciation once again the workshop on the rights of children with disabilities conducted by UNICEF during the World Summit for Social Development.

16. The emergence of a globalized economy was likely to create further challenges for disabled persons, particularly with regard to access to new technologies through computer literacy. CARICOM, which stood ready to contribute to the implementation of the commitment to create a society for all, including disabled persons, had established national councils charged with analysing those challenges. In the meantime, progress had already been achieved on the ground. In Saint Lucia, a disabled-friendly school had recently been opened with the generous support of the Governments of France and Germany and resources from the national poverty reduction fund. Similarly, in Grenada and Jamaica, financial institutions were granting revolving credit to disabled persons. In Guyana and Dominica, projects in agriculture and the craft industry had also been implemented. Much remained to be done, however, in order fully to integrate disabled persons into society.

17. CARICOM acknowledged the importance of the many international initiatives taken to strengthen the family, notably the observance of the International Year of the Family in 1994. It supported the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Year at plenary meetings of the General Assembly in 2003 and 2004, which would allow the trends affecting families, both positive and negative, to be studied and the commitments made in respect of families to be reaffirmed.

18. CARICOM agreed with the Secretary-General that major demographic, economic, cultural and social changes had affected both the family as an institution and family members as individuals, and it wished to reiterate its appreciation for the efforts of the Family Unit of the Division for Social Policy and Development to assist Governments in developing, implementing and evaluating family-related policies and programmes within the framework of the follow-up to the International Year of the Family.

19. CARICOM looked forward to working with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on the formulation of programmes to assist the Caribbean in addressing some of the most difficult problems affecting families, particularly unemployment, poverty and drug abuse.

20. It also looked forward to the forthcoming international workshop on social and development policies to be held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

21. **Mr. Ahsan** (Bangladesh), speaking on agenda item 108, said that his delegation fully associated itself with the statement made by the Chairman of the Group of 77 on 8 October.

22. Given the uncertainty looming over the global economy as a result of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on 11 September, the Committee should focus firmly, in its deliberations, on how to continue advancing social development in the new environment.

23. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the Commission for Social Development had finalized its multi-year programme of work. The core theme for 2002, namely integration of social and economic policy, was particularly timely given the need for States to minimize the human cost of macroeconomic policies and globalization. That assumed that it was necessary to continue helping States to provide social protection, particularly for vulnerable groups; forging international partnerships to assist developing countries, particularly the least developed countries; investing in the social sector; and taking steps to reduce the negative social and economic impact of turbulence in the international financial markets. Since the sharing of best practices in social development was a good means of achieving progress in that area, his

delegation hoped that the Commission would endeavour to raise awareness of such practices.

24. The Report on the World Social Situation, 2001, did not present an encouraging picture. The income disparity between developed and developing countries was continuing to widen; trade liberalization had not brought the dividends that would have enabled developing countries to invest more in the social sector; and there could be no real progress in reducing poverty without the galvanization of the political will of Governments. The least developed countries required special care, since they would be particularly vulnerable if the global situation deteriorated further. A programme of action for those countries had been adopted in May 2001 in Brussels. The programme, the targets and goals of which reflected those of the United Nations in that area, called on the least developed countries to increase budgetary allocations for social infrastructure and basic social services, create a favourable environment for enhancing social sector investment, train social service providers, encourage the establishment of public-private partnerships and improve housing and public health-care facilities. It also called on them to take steps to empower people living in poverty, particularly women, and enhance their access to basic social services.

25. The least developed countries were committed to taking those measures under the Brussels Programme of Action, but their efforts would be futile if their development partners, including the international financial institutions and the developed countries, failed to fulfil their part of the undertakings, namely increasing official development assistance in support of the efforts by the least developed countries. Those countries needed financial and other assistance to develop effective safety nets and swift response mechanisms to cope with natural disasters and socio-economic shocks, including those resulting from economic reforms and fiscal adjustments. They also required support to improve their education and health facilities and national statistical systems, and, more generally, to mitigate social exclusion, insecurity and vulnerability.

26. **Ms. Kok Li Peng** (Singapore), speaking on agenda item 109, said that in the report on the World Ageing Situation, 2002, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs pointed out that life expectancy at birth had increased globally by about 20 years since 1950, to its current level of 66 years and that longevity was a reality shared by both developed and developing countries. At the same time, there was an increase in the number of elderly persons. The efforts of the United Nations to focus attention on that issue were timely. Attitudes towards the elderly were changing and she applauded that change because elderly persons played an important role. Most cultures traditionally recognized the wisdom of the elderly and their stabilizing effect for communities. In relatively recent times, however, their role had been diminished in favour of a youth culture.

27. The world population was undergoing a revolution in terms of longevity. Her delegation welcomed the continued efforts by the Organization in that area and supported the preparations for the Second World Assembly on Ageing, to be held in Madrid in 2002.

28. Singapore had taken a number of initiatives with regard to health care for the elderly. By the year 2030, the proportion of Singaporeans aged 65 and above would triple. The Ministry of Health had estimated that the latter would comprise 20 per cent of the patients in hospitals, and an inter-ministerial committee on health care for the elderly had been formed in 1997 to review the health-care needs of the elderly and identify measures to ensure that those needs would continue to be met. Its recommendations had been supplemented by those of the inter-ministerial committee on the ageing population, established in 1998. The work of those two committees had made it possible to define a number of principles: care for the elderly should emphasize health promotion and disease prevention; institutionalization should be a measure of last resort; the individual and his family should take primary responsibility for the care of the elderly; since health care for older persons tended to be long term, it should be affordable; the Government was responsible for support and preventive activities, as well as providing care in cases of acute illness, setting policy guidelines and plans, and developing and regulating services; long-term care should be the preserve of non-governmental organizations and the private sector. Health care for the elderly was provided through a spectrum comprising short-term care and long-term care. In order to keep health care for the elderly affordable, financing was based on the principles of individual responsibility, community assistance and government funding.

29. In anticipation of the growing need for long-term care, Singapore was considering the development of a comprehensive financing scheme to help individuals pay for such care. In addition, the ministries responsible regularly monitored demographic trends and changes in the care needs of the elderly and reviewed measures already in place to provide a continuum of cost-effective and quality care for the elderly.

30. For the longevity revolution to be fully exploited, there had to be a parallel emphasis on providing adequate and affordable health care to the ageing, who constituted an essential social resource.

31. **Mr. Widodo** (Indonesia) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Despite a decade of unprecedented global economic growth, world income inequality had increased. Globalization and economic crises had compounded the problems of poverty and unemployment and had hobbled the efforts of many developing countries to carry out the commitments made during the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. The fourth meeting of ASEAN ministers responsible for social welfare, held in Singapore in August 2001, nevertheless, gave rise to optimism. That meeting had underscored the Association's determination to realize the vision of a community of caring societies by 2020.

32. Indonesia believed that it was the primary responsibility of nations to do everything possible to ensure social development, a responsibility that his country had carried out in spite of months of unrest and political conflict, but it was also true that many of the obstacles to social development must be addressed at the international level. Social development objectives included not only improving health care or promoting equality in the field of development. Strengthening the role of each individual within society and the stability of society itself, as well as measures to combat racism, intolerance and terrorism were also important. Concerted action must be taken in order to make the planet a safer place, reduce unemployment and enhance social welfare. In that regard, there was a need to take into account the demographic changes occurring throughout the world. The increase in the number of older persons, which would be discussed at the Second World Assembly on Ageing posed a challenge, as stated in the Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific. His country's policies were designed to respond in a proportional manner in order to ease the demographic transition between the generations and maintain family unity. Of no less concern to Indonesia was the situation of the nation's youth and the juvenilization of poverty, as a result of globalization and the economic crisis. In that regard, the World Programme of Action for Youth for the Year 2000 and Beyond was as relevant as ever. Since the young people in Indonesia had played an important role in overcoming the recent constitutional and political challenges, Indonesia sought to redouble its efforts in the field of education, renewing its commitment to literacy for all, as recommended by the draft proposal and plan of action for the United Nations Decade for Literacy. Other vulnerable groups in society, including the disabled, 80 per cent of whom lived in developing countries, should not be neglected. Although the Asian Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, was coming to an end, Indonesia remained committed, in spite of its economic limitations, to building a society, in which all people could contribute their talents to national development.

31. **Ms. Kang** Kyung-wha (Republic of Korea), speaking under agenda item 109, said that recent advances in science and technology had brought about a rapid expansion of the global economy, but also an ageing of the global population as a result of the increase in life expectancy. The challenge could not be met in isolation from such concerns as social integration, poverty eradication, economic stability, sustainable development and gender equality. Indeed, the declining productivity of society and increasing burden on the productive population led to greater government spending on social security and welfare programmes for the elderly. As far back as 1982, the International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted at the First World Assembly on Ageing, which had been held in Vienna, had provided recommendations for the elaboration of national strategies. The International Year of Older Persons, 1999 had drawn participants from numerous governments and non-governmental organizations for the movement "Towards a society for all ages".

34. She hoped that the Second World Assembly on Ageing, to be held in Spain in 2002, would lead to the adoption of a revised International Plan of Action on Ageing that was attuned to the demographic, socio-

economic and technological changes of the previous two decades. In many traditional societies, the extended family provided protection for the elderly and the most vulnerable members of society. However, the pace and demands of modern life were such that the concept of the extended family and the moral codes that dictated respect and care for the elderly were becoming increasingly untenable. The elderly were being stripped of their traditional roles, without being assigned a new place in society. The consequences of the phenomenon had been even more pronounced in countries struggling with limited resources against economic difficulties. As it recovered from its economic crisis, the Republic of Korea was expanding opportunities for employment of the elderly, particularly within their own communities.

35. **Ms. Maw Maw** (Myanmar) said that her delegation aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. By adopting at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action on Social Development, participants had committed themselves to eradicating poverty, expanding productive employment, reducing unemployment, enhancing social integration and creating an enabling environment for social development. The outcomes since then had varied from country to country.

36. The focal point for social development in Myanmar was the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, supported by the National Committee on Social Development, which had been established prior to the World Summit. Cooperatives, which had existed in Myanmar for over 50 years, but had adapted to the demands of the market economy, contributed to the achievement of the goals set out in the Programme of Action. The key to economic and social development was education and that was why Myanmar, with assistance from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), was currently implementing a plan to ensure that 80 per cent of all children finished primary school. Efforts must also be made, however, to respond to the needs of the elderly, especially those living alone. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement coordinated activities in that field, in collaboration with various non-governmental organizations.

37. While Myanmar acknowledged that social development was first and foremost a national responsibility, the international community as a whole had a responsibility to assist.

38. **Mr. Manalo** (Philippines), speaking under agenda item 108, said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Philippines welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (A/56/169), as well as the adoption by Member States of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, which placed emphasis on accessibility, health care and social services, employment and sustainable means of livelihood.

39. In 2000, the Philippines had strengthened its law governing accessibility by directing Government agencies to provide structural features for persons with disabilities in State universities so as to facilitate their access to higher education and thereby hasten their integration into the mainstream of Philippine society. The President had also appointed a sectoral representative on the National Anti-Poverty Commission. In partnership with the Government and non-governmental organizations, the National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons had established programmes to improve the skills and living conditions of disabled persons, but also to encourage them to seek gainful employment. The integration of persons with disabilities into the economic mainstream, a task facilitated by information technology and in particular the Internet, was one way to reduce poverty. That could be seen in the Asia and Pacific region, where disabled women and girls were the marginalized group that was most at risk to living in poverty. While it was true that since the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992) progress had been made in combating discrimination against disabled persons, much more remained to be done. The forthcoming review of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons should provide insights on the areas in which progress still needed to be made, such as increased accessibility and promotion of the independence, self-fulfilment and dignity of disabled persons. In today's world, one out of every 10 persons suffered from some disability. The international community should therefore increase the effectiveness of their advocacy on behalf of persons with disabilities and better sensitize the public to their specific

problems. For its part, the Philippines would be submitting a draft resolution, entitled "Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons: towards a society for all in the twenty-first century".

40. **Mr. Enkhtsetseg** (Mongolia) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He noted that, while globalization brought greater opportunities, it heightened the vulnerability and insecurity of some of the weakest and poorest nations. Social exclusion, marginalization and inequality among countries persisted, exacerbated by existing and evolving transboundary threats.

41. The 1990s could be described as a decade of international commitments to development, as demonstrated by a number of international conferences and summits on that issue. Yet, in his Report on the World Social Situation, 2001 (E/2001/70), the Secretary-General noted that the international community had failed to deliver on commitments made during that period. It was therefore imperative for all stakeholders to redouble their efforts, particularly with a view to halving poverty by 2015. While nations bore the primary responsibility to do their utmost to ensure social development, the cooperation and support of the international community were equally necessary. His delegation therefore welcomed the integrated approach outlined by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "Road map towards the implementation of the Millennium Declaration" (A/56/326). His Government, for its part, had developed a national programme aimed at reducing poverty, enforcing the rule of law and promoting sustainable development, in other words, ensuring human security through a policy encompassing the ecological, economic, social, political and legal aspects of development.

42. Education was a fundamental component of social development. And yet, according to the results of the worldwide 2000 assessment in the context of "Education for All" universal primary education was a challenge which the international community had not taken up. It must therefore make every effort to achieve the goal set out in the Dakar Framework for Action for Education for All, adopted at the World Education Forum, namely, that all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities should have access to primary education. His delegation supported the draft action plan for a United Nations Literacy Decade, referred to in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly" (A/56/140).

43. The attainment of those varied goals would be facilitated by cooperatives which, as indicated by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "Cooperatives and social development" (A/56/73), could make a significant contribution to alleviating poverty, promoting employment for the greatest number of people and ensuring the fullest possible participation of women, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities in development. His delegation had therefore welcomed the draft guidelines aimed at creating a supportive environment for the development of cooperatives (A/56/73, annex).

44. As the ageing of the population had become a global phenomenon, his delegation looked forward to the forthcoming Second World Assembly on Ageing.

45. **Mr. Andrabi** (Pakistan), speaking on agenda items 108 and 109, expressed his delegation's support for the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He noted that social development essentially meant achieving a better quality of life for all segments of society, including the most vulnerable (older persons, disabled persons and children), while guaranteeing participation, social integration and equality of opportunities, and stressed the linkages between social and economic development of individuals, communities and societies.

46. The current world social situation was far from satisfactory. Progress in a number of key areas, was non-existent or marginal, or had even been reversed. Inequalities among countries and within societies were growing. The aggravation of abject poverty and endemic deprivation; discrimination, social exclusion, intolerance and marginalization; the persistence of conflicts; the disintegration of society owing to certain controversial social and cultural norms and attitudes; and the demographic decline and resultant decrease in the workforce were all factors that called for more global efforts and probably a revisiting of the international community's social agenda.

47. The natural family, based on kinship, was the fundamental unit of society. A stable and nurturing

family helped to achieve social coherence and harmony and, thus, progress. In Pakistan, the institution of the family remained strong. The traditional multi-generational family and the extended family could take care of the most vulnerable segments of society effectively. In order to ensure meaningful social development, there was a need to recognize the family as an institution and as the first line of defence against exclusion, marginalization and social disintegration. Unfortunately, however, at the international level, the institution of the family was a subject of controversy, aided by initiatives that were in fact aimed at imposing the behaviour and attitudes of one particular type of society on all societies the world over. Such attempts, under the guise of new concepts of social development, must be discouraged and eschewed, since they bred mistrust, misunderstanding and, ultimately, conflict between societies.

48. The ageing of the population was likely to become a major demographic phenomenon in the twenty-first century. The Second World Assembly on Ageing, to be held in Madrid in 2002, offered a unique opportunity to create a new world vision for the elderly based on a programme of action to promote their dignity, ensure their security and well-being, preserve their special status, protect them from exploitation and work for their social integration.

49. Pakistan, with over 7 million elderly people, derived guidance from the injunctions of Islam and the country's traditions, which ensured that younger family members considered it a sacred duty and privilege to care for their parents and their elders. To consolidate that fortunate state of affairs and make the best use of the capabilities, talent and experience of the elderly, the authorities were planning to establish a task force of distinguished senior citizens to conduct studies and issue recommendations based on realities as observed in practice.

50. Despite difficulties and a less than favourable international environment, Pakistan had made substantial progress in improving the quality of life of its citizens, in particular the most vulnerable, thanks to the appropriate steps that it had taken.

51. **Mr. Andjaba** (Namibia), speaking on agenda item 27, associated himself with the statement made by the representative of Botswana on behalf of the Southern African Development Community and the one made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

52. Since the World Summit for Social Development, Namibia had embarked upon the task of addressing social development core issues by establishing the required national mechanisms and programmes. In partnership with multilateral actors, in particular the United Nations and the World Bank, it had adopted a poverty reduction strategy with a long-term vision of economic prosperity for the country, outlining specific actions to achieve it. Its first national development plan (1995-2000) had also established poverty reduction as one of its development objectives. In addition, an action programme had been drawn up with the assistance of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). Namibia had also launched a public works policy which, apart from strengthening infrastructure, had produced promising results in respect of job creation and had made it possible to stabilize incomes during periods of drought and other disasters. It had furthermore made it possible to consider the question of the financing of such programmes, and had offered the opportunity to all parties to identify their roles and responsibilities in carrying out and following up on the national poverty reduction strategy.

53. Despite the significant efforts made under those initiatives, in Namibia as in other developing countries, poverty remained a major obstacle to the realization of social development goals and the major cause of most of the country's social ills. It would be difficult indeed to speak of social development without alluding to poverty and economic development.

54. The fact that Namibia had been classified among the medium-income countries was sometimes an obstacle to securing the financial resources required for the implementation of its national poverty reduction strategy. According to a recent survey, 47 per cent of Namibians were relatively poor and 13 per cent were extremely poor. It was therefore likely that the objective set at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly of halving poverty by 2015 would not be attained.

55. The HIV/AIDS pandemic was taking on alarming proportions in Namibia, and had begun to jeopardize the social and economic gains the country had made. Because it affected the economically active section of society, care was no longer given to the elderly, who

themselves must now care for the ill and for orphans. Furthermore, when both parents died of AIDS it was not uncommon for children to head families. The resources allocated to combating HIV/AIDS adversely affected the budgets available for other health problems or other sectors such as education, housing or poverty reduction. His delegation wished to re-emphasize that it would be difficult for Namibia to fight HIV/AIDS without the cooperation and support of the international community.

56. Namibia welcomed the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted by the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly. It was committed to achieving the objectives set in the Declaration of Commitment, and invited the rest of the international community to do the same. It looked forward to the Global AIDS and Health Fund becoming operational, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa.

57. Namibia, as many other developing countries, was faced with a dilemma in coping with globalization. While globalization had apparently benefited some regions of the world, the same could not be said for its effect on southern Africa. For some developing countries, globalization had not only diminished prospects for growth, it had aggravated inequalities and marginalized them still more in the world economy. Collective solutions must be sought by developing countries and developed countries alike to ensure that globalization benefited all countries in the world.

58. Lastly, his delegation welcomed the decision by the Commission for Social Development to address the question of the integration of social and economic policy in 2002, and considered that the International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Mexico in 2002, would be a good opportunity to make progress in that field.

59. **Ms. Al Haj Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) associated herself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The consolidation of social development and the right of every human being to live with dignity, free from poverty, disease, ignorance and the ills of society, were closely linked issues for which both Governments and the international community bore equal responsibility. Since the Copenhagen Summit, the social situation in the world had in fact deteriorated, in particular in the developing countries, and globalization, in spite of the opportunities for progress which it offered at the economic level and with regard to information and culture, had accentuated inequalities in living standards and exacerbated poverty and insecurity. The developing countries did not have the means to compete with the developed countries on international markets and the gap between the North and South had widened further. The limits to international cooperation were revealed at moments when concrete, material assistance to the developing countries was necessary. That assistance was often tied to unreasonable or unacceptable conditions, both with regard to basic issues such as debt relief and the opening of markets to developing countries' products, and of steps to ensure that economic progress had a direct impact on development and social progress.

60. In spite of those difficulties, her Government had made social development a priority. In the area of poverty eradication, the programmes and policies it had adopted were aimed at protecting low-income categories by guaranteeing all citizens access to basic social services. Efforts were under way to modernize the health and education sectors and steps had been taken in the area of food supply. Her Government had also organized, in cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a seminar on poverty eradication.

61. As far as employment was concerned, her Government had increased civil service salaries and equality of opportunity for all citizens, male and female, was guaranteed by the Constitution, as was the integration of the disabled into society through the provision of training and job opportunities. The Constitution also guaranteed the rights of workers up to and following retirement, with a view to protecting older persons and guaranteeing them life with dignity. In that context, her delegation would make every effort to ensure the success of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, to be held in Madrid in 2002. Her Government had also made youth a priority: education was free and compulsory and special attention was paid to youth organizations and to job creation for young people.

62. Since much remained to be done in order to achieve a fully satisfactory level of social development, her Government was cooperating with non-governmental organizations and international organizations to define the necessary development strategies.

63. One of the fundamental building blocks of social development was the ability of every human being to enjoy the basic rights to education, health and employment in an environment conducive to living life with dignity and full respect for human rights. However, such words became meaningless in the context of foreign occupation and denial of individuals' most basic rights, as clearly illustrated by the situation in the Arab territories occupied by Israel in Palestine, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. In those areas, the Israeli occupation forces made daily use of every form of repression of freedoms and of discrimination against Arab citizens, imposing arbitrary measures and an economic blockade which prevented young people and adults of both sexes from living with dignity. In addition to the effects of the occupation, the appropriation of natural resources was jeopardizing the creation of conditions conducive to development. The Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights had likewise been very costly for the Syrian Arab Republic. Just as States, in particular the developing countries, were being asked to meet their commitments arising out of the World Summit for Social Development, pressure must be brought to bear on Israel to put an end to its occupation of Arab territories and to implement resolutions which carried international legitimacy by returning lands to their rightful owners if a climate favourable to social development, based on peace and security, was to be created in the region.

64. **Mr. Alcalay** (Venezuela) said his delegation associated itself fully with the statements made by the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran and of Chile, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Rio Group, respectively.

65. The objectives defined in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action should be reviewed with a view to ensuring their implementation; that had been his delegation's focus in participating in the special session on achieving social development in a globalizing world.

66. In order to combat inequality in society, his Government had developed a comprehensive plan for social development based on social integration, sharing of responsibilities, participation of society and promotion of family structures, and covering health, education, income, productivity, housing, cultural and social values and local history. It had also created programmes aimed at developing the informal sector of the economy and provided assistance and funding to job-creating microenterprises and financial support to small and medium enterprises and agroindustry. The creation of new banking institutions had lowered the unemployment rate during the first half of 2001 and reduced the role of the informal sector.

67. On the subject of youth, article 79 of the Venezuelan Constitution provided that young people could and should participate in development and that the State, working with families and society, must help them to do so. The Government had to that end developed several programmes designed to protect against the social dangers to which young people were exposed, enable them to find work and integrate them into society. At the international level, Venezuela favoured any initiative to empower young people, and promoted cooperation and the exchange of information on experiences. It had sponsored the draft resolution submitted by Portugal on policies and programmes involving youth.

68. With regard to the disabled, article 80 of Venezuela's Constitution provided that all persons who were disabled or had special needs must be enabled to exercise their rights fully and be integrated into the family and the community, and that it was the responsibility of the State, in cooperation with families and society, to facilitate their integration into professional life. Accordingly, the Government had adopted policies and strategies promoting the active participation of the disabled in the economic, social, cultural and political life of the country, in order to create one society for all and to give support to families. The National Council for the Integration of the Disabled was the body coordinating those policies.

69. In the field of education, Venezuela had begun since 1999 to devise and put into effect a set of policies directed towards improving the quality of teaching within the framework of national integration. In particular, it had made changes in its programmes and systems for evaluation and for supervision of the ongoing training of teachers, and it had undertaken to improve existing facilities and create an appropriate legal framework, the aim being to adopt a national education project by consensus. In the process, it had been guided by a number of principles set out in the new Constitution, such as social justice, participatory democracy, free competition, environmental protection, solidarity, human dignity and the national good. At the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, it had

reaffirmed its determination to achieve the objective of education for all.

70. Concerning the role that cooperatives played in social development, Venezuela had set up a single social fund to be used to improve the social programmes having to do with health, education, microbusinesses and cooperatives. It had also established a microcredit fund in order to help the most needy, especially women, as well as a Sovereign People's Bank to serve small and medium-sized enterprises. In addition, it had adopted a law to facilitate the creation of national cooperatives and strengthen the collective movement.

71. Venezuela attached special importance to the family, the basic unit for the development of individuals and peoples, and the guardian of values and cultural traditions. The family needed support, and article 75 of the Constitution provided for its protection. The observance in 2004 of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family would be the occasion for assessing the success of the programmes carried out locally, nationally and internationally.

72. The twenty-first century would see the ageing of the world's population and it was therefore wise to adopt policies that took full account of older persons and the role they played within society. Article 80 of the Constitution guaranteed older persons the full exercise of their rights and the benefit of social security. The National Geriatrics and Gerontology Institute was responsible for developing, coordinating, implementing and monitoring the programmes for older persons. A number of different centres provided services to them. The National Assembly was, furthermore, currently studying a draft bill on the protection of senior citizens.

73. **Mr. Kyazze** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)), speaking on agenda item 108 and referring to the draft proposal and plan prepared by the Director-General of UNESCO for a United Nations literacy decade (A/56/114-E/2001/93 and Add.1), noted that the plan was based mainly on the results of the World Education Forum held in April 2000 in Dakar and on the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly held in July 2000 for the five-year review of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. The view was widely shared that literacy was at the heart of basic education and social development; and the challenge that it posed to both industrialized and developing countries had to be met not by one-time programmes but through intensive, focused and sustained efforts.

74. Literacy for all was a hard goal to achieve. There had been progress, but the end was not yet in sight. While the situation had improved since 1990, East and South Asia still had about 71 per cent of the world's illiterates, while illiteracy rates in Africa and Latin America averaged 40 per cent. Illiteracy was concentrated among the poorest of the poor and especially among women, who were the most affected by it; and certain issues of a cultural, ethnic or legal order were a hindrance to progress. It was unacceptable that some 875 million adults were illiterate and 113 million children attended no school of any sort. That represented a tremendous loss of human potential and a failure on the part of societies to carry out some of their most basic responsibilities by not addressing the causes of inequality or the lack of basic freedoms and of respect for human rights, all of which were sources of economic instability and civil disturbance.

75. The draft proposal and plan of action comprised a set of guidelines for all concerned rather than a series of actions to be taken. The conviction of UNESCO and its partners was that the Decade had most chance of succeeding at the country level and that it was for Governments and civil society to shape plans that responded to their own possibilities and needs.

76. The United Nations Literacy Decade must embrace not only adults but also children and young people, women and men, in and out of school. Solutions for different educational problems were interconnected.

77. Illiteracy was intertwined with poverty and social exclusion, while literacy was intertwined with empowerment, democracy and social development. Literacy was not just about the mechanics of reading and writing but also about restoring personal dignity and giving individuals the right to participate, demarginalizing the excluded and providing an opportunity to learn. Literacy was vital for sustainable human development. It facilitated environmental protection and preventive health education, especially where HIV/AIDS was concerned. It constituted a tool for transformation.

78. The goal of literacy for all would be achieved only through synergy of action among all the actors involved — Governments, NGOs, universities, public and private organizations and civil society at large. It was in that spirit that UNESCO, with the encouragement of the United Nations General Assembly, would continue to work with its partners towards comprehensive strategies for literacy for all as part of the agenda of education for all, with the goal of halving adult illiteracy by the year 2015.

79. **Mr. Holzmann** (World Bank), speaking on agenda items 108 and 109, observed that social protection was back on the international agenda. It played a key role in reducing poverty and providing income security for vulnerable people. There was a need to determine how poor people lived with risk and how Governments prepared for crises by having social safety nets in place. A number of developments had emerged.

80. Growth must be balanced by social policy measures. As the crisis which had rocked East Asia had shown, high growth rates were not enough. In the event of an economic shock, informal safety nets had a tendency to break down and public support measures were often inadequate. The slowdown in growth since the start of the year and the events of 11 September had proved that many countries were not adequately prepared and that potential risk must therefore be assessed and appropriate social protection measures prepared.

81. Social protection, with job creation and demarginalization, was an element of sustainable poverty reduction. As a primary element of security, it embraced both individual and macroeconomic risks. That approach mirrored poverty dynamics and economic mobility in developing countries. It had been observed that the poor consisted of two groups: those who remained poor and those who moved in and out of poverty, and it was beginning to be understood why. There was evidence that seemingly transitory shocks had long-term consequences. That suggested the need for the best instruments of social protection and social risk management.

82. Globalization had an impact which must be taken into account. While trade, technology and the introduction of new political systems had greatly improved the welfare of many around the world, they had also increased vulnerability and insecurity for other groups. Social protection therefore needed to be a safety net and springboard for the poor; it needed to focus more on poverty's causes than its symptoms, to take account of the reality that less than a quarter of the world's six billion people had access to social protection programmes and that less than five per cent could rely on their own assets in the event of problems and that elimination of poverty by the State was beyond the capacity of most developing countries.

83. The new World Bank document on social protection took all those considerations into account and defined security as freedom from vulnerability to poverty, both as an end of development and a means of achieving it. It noted that the poor were the most vulnerable group in society and should therefore have increased access to social risk-management instruments, particularly so as to help them to take more risks and in that way gradually move out of poverty.

84. Protecting the vulnerable was important for all ages. Children could have problems of nutrition or poor health, or they could be orphans as a result of AIDS or not have had the benefit of education; young people did not always have access to secondary schooling and job training; the working poor and non-poor were exposed to natural and man-made disasters and to political and health risks; the situation of the elderly was deteriorating because of population ageing, erosion of family support, urbanization and globalization and the lack of access to pension schemes. The World Bank had made social assessments and had studied gender- and health-related issues of ageing and income support systems for the elderly. It was assisting nearly 60 countries to reform their pension systems, but in many developing countries such systems were practically non-existent. That called for the introduction of non-contributory schemes, at least for the most vulnerable elderly.

85. Governments therefore had a major challenge to address and in so doing must cooperate with the private sector — while also regulating it — and with families, NGOs, trade unions and other civil society institutions. Cooperation was also needed between rich and poor countries and international organizations to prevent and mitigate risks and to help people according to their needs.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.